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SENSITIVE
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [HR](#)

SUBJECT: CROATIAN SABOR APPROVES SUPPLEMENTAL SOFA

REF: ZAGREB 244

(U) SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

¶1. (U) By a vote of 121-1, the Croatian Sabor (Parliament) approved on July 15 the Supplemental Status of Forces Agreement with the United States, which was signed in April of this year. The Sabor approved the agreement under a procedure requiring a two-thirds majority, after a determination by the Sabor's Constitutional Committee that the agreement raised legal issues within the purview of the Constitution. The opposition Social Democratic Party had insisted on passage by a two-thirds majority, and with that concession by the government, supported the agreement.

¶2. (SBU) Immediately following the vote, Prime Minister Sanader telephoned the Ambassador to inform him of the Sabor's action. The Prime Minister described the vote as a strong endorsement of closer cooperation with the United States and a sign of the excellent relations between the United States and Croatia. The Prime Minister also reiterated his hope that the Senate would act before the November elections to give its advice and consent to ratification of Croatia's accession to NATO.

¶3. (SBU) The Ambassador expressed his appreciation for the government's successful efforts to gain Sabor approval of the SOFA. The Sabor vote, with the support of the opposition SPD, was evidence of Croatia's reliability and credibility as an ally and partner. The Ambassador said he would convey the Prime Minister's desire for early ratification of Croatia's NATO accession to Washington, and would work with Washington and Croatian Ambassador Grabar-Kitarovic to encourage action by the Senate.

4 (SBU) Comment and Action Requested. In the run-up to the Sabor vote, the SOFA had come under attack in the Croatian press, including on Croatia's state-owned television network, as going too far in granting privileges and immunities to American forces. The strong vote in favor of the agreement reflects the importance both the government and the opposition attach to developing bilateral military relations with the U.S. With the Sabor action completed, Embassy requests the Department's guidance on the next steps to bring the agreement into force.

Bradtke